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Immediate Release

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Sunland Park Landfill Agrees to Strengthen Efforts to Prevent Illegal Waste Dumping; Environment Department Returns to Normal Compliance Schedule

(Santa Fe, NM) — New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Secretary Ron Curry has received assurances from the management of the Camino Real landfill in Sunland Park that measures will be taken to prevent further illegal dumping of unpermitted waste at the facility. These assurances were made to Secretary Curry during a face-to-face meeting with Ronald J. Mittelstaedt, CEO and President of Waste Connections, Inc., at the landfill Tuesday.

"I appreciate Mr. Mittelstaedt's effort in traveling to New Mexico and meeting with me in person to resolve this issue," said Secretary Curry. "I also appreciate how seriously Waste Connections is taking this problem. I am comfortable that the actions to be taken will help resolve the issues we have uncovered at the landfill in the last week."

Beginning on Wednesday August 4, NMED has conducted an enforcement crackdown at the Camino Real landfill at the direction of Governor Bill Richardson. This effort followed an anonymous tip of illegal disposal at the Sunland Park landfill, the largest in New Mexico. Enforcement efforts included through inspections of each truckload of waste entering the landfill by teams of inspectors from the Department's Solid Waste, Hazardous Waste, Air Quality and Occupational Health and Safety Bureaus.

In the past week, these inspections uncovered six problematic loads containing infectious waste including hypodermic needles from hospital, dairy, veterinary or medical operations. On Friday morning, City of El Paso and State of Texas environmental officials announced they had also found an illegal shipment of medical waste at El Paso's McCombs landfill. This load was scheduled for disposal at the Camino Real landfill until it was redirected to McCombs.

In addition to medical waste shipments, NMED personnel have also sampled several waste loads for suspected asbestos contamination.

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“The purpose of this letter is to express our commitment to redouble and strengthen our efforts to educate generators in both New Mexico and Texas as to their responsibilities to comply with...the Solid Waste Act,” Mr. Mittelstaedt wrote in his August 10 letter to Secretary Curry. “We will direct our enhanced activities at medical facilities, clinics, veterinary facilities, horse and dairy farms, and other generators.”

Following his meeting with Mr. Mittelstaedt and receipt of the letter, Secretary Curry directed NMED personnel to return to their normal inspection and compliance schedules.

“I am pleased with the landfill’s efforts on this serious issue,” said Secretary Curry. “While I take them at their word, this will not be the last time Camino Real sees us in Sunland Park. We will be back to make sure these promises are lived up to.”

For further information contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

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